

**IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

Raised Bill 1068  
Testimony of David Rodrigues  
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Good morning, Madam Chair and Distinguished Members of the Public Health Committee. I am not versed in nor do I study law books. Here I will simply offer my experience as a client who has a psychiatric illness and lives under the policies of the Whiting Forensic Division.

To the credit of the fine establishment of our Great Nation, the rights of individuals in this country far exceeds that of other countries. To the credit of those who oversee the rights of those with psychiatric disabilities that are in custody of Whiting Forensic Division, and to the credit of those who have lobbied for patients rights in Connecticut, the quality of life has improved for such individuals over the years. 5 years ago I was acquitted pursuant to § 53a-13. A conviction could have destroyed my life. As I laid up in a jail cell for 9 months tormented by mental anguish, emotional and physical pain (as a direct result of my mental condition), I experienced being in a tightly confined area with only the basic necessities of life.

It makes you really appreciate the freedom you once had. I had no rights anymore... All that I had hope for was that the legal system would not fail me as an individual and not lock me up and throw away the key, that one day and hopefully soon I could regain what I had lost. Other than that...I had nothing to keep my mind occupied and entertained, all that I was left with was my own tormenting thoughts. I am one of the lucky ones and I feel the pain of others that are worse off than I am mentally. Unless you have experienced similar mental struggles than it is near impossible to truly sympathize with those who go through it everyday. Recovery is not just all about medication and therapy. A key part of recovery is to start to enjoy life and start to feel normal. I didn't really start to recovery until I had more freedoms. Freedoms that I deserved as a citizen. One of the freedoms being the right to have my own property. Having this kind of freedom gradually helped me lose the obsession that I was the victim. I never did a poll on this but I am quite certain that if you asked all of the clients who are confined within Whiting Forensics, especially those who are actually in Whiting and they were to give you an honest answer, many of them would claim that they are the victims. It's a common misconception and theme among clients but it exists and it is a direct result of having less rights. Taking away is not the answer...taking away WILL result in more acting out. Having possessions can't make a person truly happy but taking them away can only make things worse for someone's recovery. I plead with you that this would be a huge step backward for DMHAS. Let's focus on forward progress.

Recovery is the only real way to prevention. If this idea was to pass through legislature than ask yourself what is next? What if restrictions like this were to become more broad and filter outside to the public. This kind of action could someday turn this country into something our Founding Fathers were surely against. Thank you for your ears. All of us that this could effect are hoping you make the right decision.

Respectfully,  
David Rodrigues